

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-09

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R 031050Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2946

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 24875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, CB, THA

SUBJ: CAMBODIANS REQUEST REPATRIATION OF PROMINENT REFUGEES

SUMMARY: CAMBODIANS PURSUE REQUEST FOR THAI TO TURN OVER
TO THEM FOUR REFUGEES INVOLVED IN RESISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE JUNE 16-17 DISCUSSIONS IN SISOPHON, CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY MADE A REQUEST OF THAI FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAI RATTAKUN WHICH HAS RECEIVED NO PUBLICITY BUT REMAINS AN ACTIVE QUESTION BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. IENG SARY ASKED THAT THAILAND TURN OVER TO HIS GOVERNMENT FOUR CAMBODIAN REFUGEES: (A) GENERAL SEK SAM IET, THE THOROUGHLY CORRUPT FORMER GOVERNOR OF BATTAMBANG; (B) COLONEL IM CHHOU DETH, DESCRIBED AS THE GENERAL'S RIGHT HAND MAN, A FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WHO HAS ALLEGEDLY BEEN INVOLVED IN HIS BOSS' NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES FOR YEARS; (C) DAN HSANG, ONETIME GKR MINISTER OF JUSTICE; AND (D) COLONEL KETH RETH, FORMER DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE BATTAMBANG MILITARY SUBDIVISION. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT PHICHAI, AT THE TIME, TRIED TO GIVE A VAGUE ANSWER THAT HE THOUGHT SOME WERE ALREADY IN FRANCE AND THAT RTG WOULD SEARCH FOR THE OTHERS.

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2. A FRIENDLY JOURNALIST WAS AT INTERIOR MINISTRY SEPTEMBER 2

WHEN VISIT WAS INTERRUPTED BY PHONE CALL FROM ARANYAPRATHET,
WHERE CAMBODIAN LIAISON OFFICIALS HAD APPARENTLY RAISED THE
SUBJECT AGAIN IN A MEETING WITH THEIR THAI COUNTERPARTS, AND
CALLER WAS REQUESTING INSTRUCTIONS. SOURCE DOES NOT KNOW
WHAT THE OUTCOME WAS.

3. QUESTION IS UNDOUBTEDLY A DELICATE ONE FOR RTG, WHICH DOES
NOT WANT TO BE ACCUSED FOR FORCED REPATRIATION BUT DOES WANT TO BE
FRIENDLY WITH CAMBODIA. FACT THAT ALL FOUR MEN HAVE BEEN
INVOLVED IN RESISTANCE TO COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT TO SOME DEGREE
IS ADDITIONAL COMPLICATION. RTG BROUGHT SEK SAM IET TO BANGKOK
SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, WHERE HE HAS BEEN LIVING QUIETLY WHILE THAI
HAVE SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY TO FIND HIM A NEW COUNTRY OF REFUGE,
STRIKING OUT MOST RECENTLY WITH CANADA. WE DO NOT KNOW COLONEL
IM CHHOU DETH'S WHEREABOUTS. EMBASSY HAD HEARD THAT DAN HSANG,
DRAFTING NEW CONSTITUTIONS AT HIS HOUSE IN ARANYAPRATHET IN
ANTICIPATION OF TAKEOVER OF HIS COUNTRY BY THE RESISTANCE,
DECIDED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO TO GIVE UP AND GO TO FRANCE. KETH RETH
APPEARS TO BE ONE OF THE FEW GOOD CAMBODIANS IN RESISTANCE AND IS
LIVING IN ARANYAPRATHET RECOVERING FROM CEREBRAL MALARIA.

4. WE SUSPECT THAI WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO VACILLATE ON THE
CAMBODIAN REQUEST. EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW THE QUESTION CLOSELY,
HOWEVER, SINCE, IF IT IS GRANTED, ACTION WOULD SET A VERY
UNFORTUNATE PRECEDENT.

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